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ABSTRACT

A review of the research on the effects of parental influence and parental involvement on children's reading achievement indicates that when parents take an active and positive part in their child's education the results often turn out well for the student. Parental influence is defined as any opinion, attitude, or action (other than direct tutoring) that somehow shapes or molds the child's reading attitudes. Involvement is defined as any direct tutorial help the child receives with his or her reading. Studies show that parental role modeling will improve a child's reading, because the child sees reinforcement of the value of education outside of school. Parents who read books and magazines as leisure activities are more likely to have children with a high degree of interest in literature and reading. Other studies indicate that a child must want to read before he or she can acquire any substantial reading skills. Parents' attitudes other than toward reading can also influence reading achievement. Conflict or overprotection can interfere with reading skills, sometimes requiring parent counseling. Direct parental involvement in the form of tutoring can significantly increase a child's reading skills, although the parents must also know how to tutor in order to get the best possible results. Successful readers tutored in the home receive fewer critical and punishing statements from their parents than do problem readers. Overall, the research shows that the more help a child receives from his or her parents, and the more prepared they are to help their child, the better the child's reading achievement. (HTH)

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Parental Influence and Involvement on Reading Achievement

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Recently there has been an emphasis on student achievement in American education. At the base of this movement is the primary concern for the student's reading achievement. For if a student is to succeed in education he must not only know how to read, but read with a sufficient ability so that what he has read is retained and able to be used for later reference. Reading is probably one of the most important subjects for a child to master because without a solid foundation in it, students would not be able to learn all of the other subjects they must study.

To date, there have been many studies regarding parental influence on reading achievement, and parental involvement on reading achievement. There have not, though, been any studies where both parental influence and parental involvement have been studied on the same group of students. Educators, administrators, and parents need to find out what the best way is to regulate both parental influence

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and involvement on a student's reading achievement so that each student achieves the highest amount of success in reading that he is capable of.

The purpose of this review of literature is to provide a synopsis of current literature concerning the effect of parental influence and involvement on reading achievement. The studies used involved children from all age groups. Throughout history parents have been a big influence on their children both in and out of the classroom. Depending on the circumstances and individual parents this has been both good and bad for the child. When a parent takes an active and positive part in his child's education the results often turn out well for the student. However, if the parent does not give routine and constructive help, that parent can end up pulling the child down.

For this discussion it is important to first define a few critical terms. Parental influence will be defined as any opinion, attitude, or action (other than direct tutoring) that the parent does or implies that somehow shapes or molds the child's attitude toward reading. Parental involvement will be defined as any direct tutorial help the child receives with his or her reading work. Lastly, reading

achievement is defined as how well the child progresses with his or her reading ability. As the child becomes a better reader his reading achievement will increase.

The current movement in education suggests that "time on task" should be the highest priority for the teacher. The more time a child spends doing academic work, the better prepared he or she will be in that subject. Therefore, it is suggested that the teacher do everything possible to get the most out of every class session so that each child achieves his highest potential. This exact line of thought has also made its way into the "reading circles" and it is now believed that the more routine role-modeling a child receives from his parents, and the more time he spends reading and practicing, the better reader he will become. This seems so logical it is difficult to believe that anyone could think otherwise.

When concepts and skills taught at school are practiced at home with parent supervisors, the child receives a vital message regarding the importance of education (Hourcade & Richardson, 1987). This is an important point because it suggests that the child must see reinforcement on the value of education from some place other than

just school. And when the child sees that his parents value it, the child will start to value it more and more.

Morrow (1983) thinks this to be true also. He is of the opinion that parents who read books and magazines as leisure activities are more likely to have children with a high degree of interest in literature and reading. Once again it is being shown what a high degree of influence the parent has over the child. It is not necessary for the parent to "order and demand" something, only that he set an example for the child to see. Once that example is set, and the child picks up on what his parents view as important, that child will usually follow. This is all the more reason why parents should be seen reading, even if it is only a newspaper, by their children. The "do what I say, not as I do" type of attitude on the part of their parents clearly is not the way to get children to read more and become better readers. They must be literally "caught in the act" of reading by their children.

Reading should be started as early as possible rather than waiting until the child reaches some set age or appears "old enough" to want to read (Mason, 1980). Mason thinks that the earlier a child

shows an interest in looks and starts to read the better it is for him. Since children generally do show an interest in looks before they get to school the parents are the ones that must set the example for them. When the child gets to school he should already like books and reading. He should not be seeing a book for the first time. Parents then have an incredible amount of influence over their children since it is they who form the child's ideas even before that child walks into a school. Parents, then should use their influence to its full advantage and let the child know through both word and action that reading is important.

A study to determine the effects of parental influence on a child's reading achievement was conducted by Clark (1976). Parents of successful readers were examined to see what, if anything, they had done to influence their child's reading achievement. Clark found that all of the parents studied, especially the mothers, were avid readers. He concluded that it was important for the child to see his parents reading in order to acquire for himself a desire to read. He noted that this was important because the child had to want to read before he would acquire any substancial skill at it.

Kontos (1986) essentially came up with the same findings as Clark in her study. Kontos found that young children must have an environment where they see adults write, read, and converse in a meaningful way. She discovered that only when children see the importance of reading do they ever become good readers.

A student's reading achievement is not just related to the parent's attitude toward reading. There are other influences by the parent that can determine the level of a child's reading achievement. Thalberg (1972) found that parents that displayed conflicting interparent reactions, were inconsistent and ambiguous in their decisions, and who gave their children other inordinate pressures usually had children who did not have a high level of success in their reading achievement. He concluded that in order to get a child to realize his highest potential regarding reading achievement the student's parents must be consistant regarding the other aspects of the child's life.

In a slightly earlier study Kaplan (1971), examining the effects of counseling with mothers of exceptional children, concluded that parents of underachievers need assistance in dealing with feelings of

anger and guilt. Real help means assisting parents in understanding how these feelings result in overprotection and permissive behavior in dealing with their children. He found that a parent's problems that had nothing to do with the child or the child's reading could still influence the child's reading attitudes and achievemet if not properly dealt with.

Richardson and Brown (1978) suggest that parent counseling can improve reading achievement for certain groups of children. They found that the side effects of educational counseling with parents are significant in improving parent-child relationships. This is important because it shows that if there is a family problem affecting reading achievement that really is independent of the field of reading, it can be corrected so that the child still is able to become the best reader he is capable of being.

Ekwall and Shanker (1983) suggest that because the inability to read and emotional problems connected with the home environment are clearly related. Parent counseling could be an important part of a reading program. They found evidence to support the notion that improvement in parental attitudes also improved the children s

attitude toward reading. From this study, then, even when the parent is not trying to directly help for influence the child with his reading if there are problems at home the child is not going to be doing his best possible job.

Shuttleworth (1986) stated that a startling improvement was realized by students when they were helped at home. In his study he took eighteen children from fourteen homes and monitored the progress they were making when tutored by their parents. He found that 50% of them made significant progress once the parental tutoring began. His findings prove that there is a direct correlation between parental involvement and the child's reading ability.

Hourcade and Richardson (1987) support the finds of Shuttleworth. In their study they examined thirty children. Each child first took the Woodcock Reading Test and then received a new list of words every two weeks for eight weeks. The words on all of these lists were randomly selected. The students were to study these lists at home with their parents helping them. Before the program started each child was learning on the average of 9.5 words for each two week period without parental help. After the parents started tutoring,

however, the children were learning on the average of 12.7 words for a two week period. This study showed that there is a clear relationship between time spent on study time with parental help and time spent studying alone.

In another study, Bates (1986) took fourteen children and randomly assigned them to two different groups. Each group then received parental tutoring in reading three hours a week for seven weeks. During the seven weeks, though, one group's parents were counseled about how to give reading help while the other group's parents were at the end of the seven weeks the group whose parents had received the additional training did much better with their reading achievement. This study proves that although parental tutoring is very important, the parents must also know how to tutor in order to get the best possible results from their children.

A last study that should be mentioned is the study by Diane Scott-Jones (1987). In her study she examined the quality of the parental tutoring. She studied twenty-four children while they were being tutored by their parents. She found that there is a direct correlation between the types of comment and reinforcing statements

the parents made to the child and the child's reading acheivement. Successful readers received fewer critical and punishing statements from their parents than problem readers.

The literature reveals that there is a strong correlation between students tutored at home by their parents and those students who are not. The literature further goes on to show that there is direct correlation between the parent's attitude and ability to teacher reading and the child's reading achievement. All indications suggest that the more help a child receives from his parent, and the more prepared that parent is to able to help his child, the better that child will do with regard to reading achievement.

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